

Conservation Agent Career



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



A Career as a Conservation Agent?

Are you looking to be part of something greater than yourself; to be part of a diverse team of professionals who find meaning and purpose in protecting Missouri's fish, forest, and wildlife resources; professionals who exemplify character, valor, and integrity? The Missouri Department of Conservation is looking for people willing to make a difference in their communities. If you feel the calling to be outdoors protecting our conservation heritage, and have the courage and desire to wear the badge and serve the citizens of Missouri with fairness and integrity, then a career as a conservation agent may be for you.



What Are Conservation Agents?

Conservation agents are local representatives of the Missouri Conservation Commission who have a broad knowledge of the Missouri Department of Conservation's many responsibilities.

Conservation agents are licensed peace officers. They enforce the rules of the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* and state laws on lands owned, leased, or managed by the Conservation Department. Risks are involved in these law enforcement endeavors, but the benefits far outweigh the challenges. Agents have a certain amount of freedom in setting their work schedule. They have many opportunities to meet interesting people, perform an educational role, and work outdoors.

The duties of a conservation agent are almost always interesting and vary with the season. During warmer months, an agent may check fishing permits, catch a violator operating an illegal net, or arrest a person who is using an electrical device to take fish illegally.



In addition to natural resource law enforcement, agents spend time assisting with outreach programs, including those that teach outdoor skills.



While agents frequently enforce the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* in the field, they also conduct investigations resulting in arrests and the confiscation of illegally harvested wildlife and the firearms used in these violations.

Duties related to hunting are generally performed during colder months. The workload and responsibilities are determined by the needs of the agent's assigned county. Some agents may primarily check waterfowl hunters, while others may work mostly with upland game hunters.

All counties in the state enjoy a whitetail deer population, and agents, working alone or teaming up with an aircraft patrol, investigate spotlights illegally shooting deer at night. Patrol, investigations, and stakeouts are a normal part of the job, as is a certain amount of administrative work.

Conservation agents respond to the public through an intense public relations and educational program. Agents' success is measured by their performance of the following duties: contacting resource users and landowners; holding meetings; conducting hunter safety and ethics instruction; appearing on radio and television programs; providing information at fairs and exhibits; writing newspaper articles; and providing programs for schools, clubs, and organizations.



Agents provide programs and outdoor skills clinics to civic groups, schools, and other organizations interested in conservation.



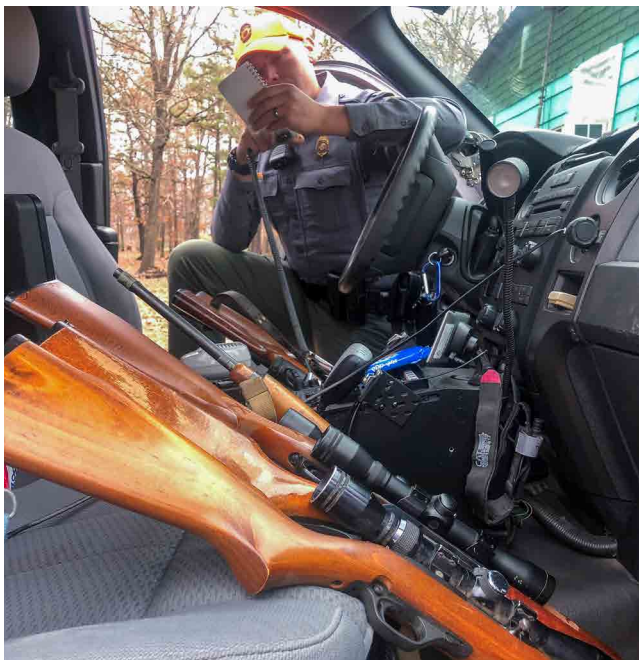
Agents visit with landowners individually and provide resource management assistance.

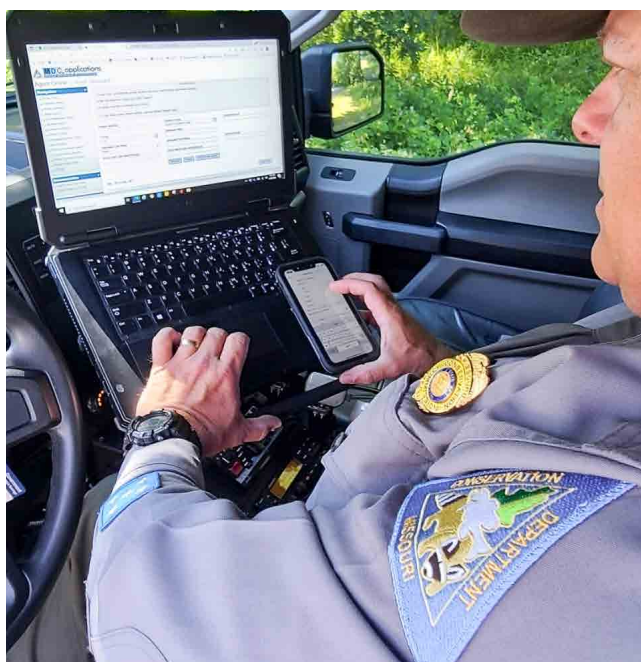
Management duties in wildlife, fisheries, and forestry are determined by the agent's assigned area. Wildlife management involves surveying wildlife populations, making landowner habitat improvement contacts, investigating wildlife damage complaints, and other wildlife-related duties. Duties in fisheries management include conducting pollution investigations, assisting in fish distribution, monitoring fish rescue efforts, advising landowners on lake and pond management, and other fisheries-related duties. Providing forestry development advice to private landowners and forest fire investigations are just a couple examples of the many responsibilities in forestry management.

The variety of duties and responsibilities conservation agents perform demands a high level of interest in people and in conservation. Along with law enforcement, community relations, education, and resource management, agents are also active in other department affairs, including assisting in public land acquisition, helping select permit vendors, maintaining equipment, attending training, and providing emergency public services.

Conservation agents are provided uniforms and equipment, including the best possible firearms, radios, vehicles, and special enforcement equipment.

Much of the agents' work takes place outdoors, either working alone or as part of a team.





Agents use the latest in technology to aid in natural resource law enforcement.

Qualifications

Conservation agents must be 21 years old at the closing date for the job application. They must also have a bachelor's degree in a related field of study. They must possess a valid driver's license or be able to obtain a valid Missouri driver's license by date of employment.

Applicants must be able to meet the physical demands of resource law enforcement and be able to work outdoors in extreme temperatures and conditions.

After successfully completing the selection process, a conditional offer of appointment as a conservation agent trainee is made. Applicants must successfully complete a physical fitness test, a psychological examination, and a drug test, which are paid for by the department.

Conditions of Employment

To be commissioned as a conservation agent, the applicant must be willing to accept assignment anywhere in the state. County assignments are determined by department need based on vacancies across the state. The preference of the trainee is also taken under consideration. New agents are required to complete the field training evaluation program after they graduate from the training academy.



Agents frequently present public programs involving Missouri's wildlife (above).



Risks are involved in agents' law enforcement endeavors, as violators are almost always armed, especially during hunting seasons (left).

Conservation Agent Training

Training consists of 26 weeks of intense instruction in all areas of responsibility. In addition to classroom hours, conservation agent trainees participate in physically demanding practical exercises.

These range from daily physical fitness training to hands-on operation of all types of equipment used in conservation agent work. Upon graduation from the academy, trainees also work special assignments in the field under the supervision of a veteran field training agent.

Courses in legal studies teach trainees constitutional and state law. Interpersonal perspective classes expose trainees to the knowledge they need to deal with the human side of fish, forest, and wildlife resource

law enforcement. In addition, the program covers criminal investigations, defensive tactics and firearms training. Throughout the program, trainees learn officer-safety techniques that will enable them to feel secure when they begin their permanent assignment in the field. Trainees receive technical instruction in fish, forest, and wildlife

management, along with instruction on the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct effective informational and educational programs.

Upon successful completion of the training, the Missouri Department of Public Safety will issue a Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) License attesting that the trainee has completed 1,000 hours of licensed law enforcement training. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training also has certified the conservation agent training program.



Career Advancement and Benefits

Agents have the opportunity to advance to other positions within Protection Branch, including promotions to corporal, sergeant-detective in our specialized units, lieutenant, captain, major, deputy chief, and chief. In addition, agents can transfer to and advance through other branches within the department.

The Department of Conservation provides a full suite of benefits:

- Paid vacation, sick leave, and holidays
- Competitive salary
- Paid retirement programs
- Group health insurance
- Worker's compensation coverage
- Long-term disability insurance
- Pension and deferred compensation programs



Join the K-9 Unit

As a conservation agent you will have the opportunity to join the K-9 Unit. MDC K-9s are single purpose sporting dogs specializing in wildlife detection, evidence search and recovery, tracking, and public programs. The dogs and handlers go through detailed training together to create successful teams for field work and outreach programs.

Need Some Experience?

Become a Conservation Agent Volunteer or an Intern

Protection Branch offers a volunteer program (Protection Volunteer Program) and paid internship opportunities that allow qualified applicants the chance to ride-along with conservation agents and gain experience in resource law enforcement, public education programs, fish, forest, and wildlife management, and more. MDC provides as many opportunities as possible to qualified, well rounded, diverse applicants, regardless of their levels of resource law enforcement experience.



Volunteer and intern positions frequently put participants in direct contact with wildlife.

Volunteer and Internship Requirements

- Have a 4-year degree or be enrolled in a degree program
- Complete volunteer/internship application and selection process
- Pass criminal record and background check



Volunteers and interns assist conservation agents in investigations and resource law enforcement.



How to Apply

Conservation Agent (Trainee)

Applications for the Conservation Agent Training Academy can be found online at jobs.mdc.mo.gov under the Law Enforcement link. If openings are available, applications will typically open in the spring or summer.



Protection Volunteer Program

If you are interested in becoming a protection volunteer, please contact the closest regional office. Regional office contact information is available online at mdc.mo.gov/contact-engage/regional-mdc-offices.

Internship Opportunities

To inquire about conservation agent internship opportunities, please contact MDC Commission Headquarters at 573-522-4115 and ask to speak with the protection programs specialist.



For more information on becoming a conservation agent, please visit our website at mdc.mo.gov or at jobs.mdc.mo.gov/go/Law-Enforcement-Jobs/4412300.

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs of the Missouri Department of Conservation is available to all individuals without regard to their race, color, religion, national origin, sex, ancestry, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, or disability. Questions should be directed to the Department of Conservation, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102, 573-751-4115 (voice) or 800-735-2966 (TTY), or to Chief, Public Civil Rights, Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.